THE WEEKLY RALLY SERVICE

ROBERT A. HUNT

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BY
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FOREWORD

The following pages give the story of how the midweek service of the Chouteau Place Methodist Episcopal Church, of Saint Louis, Missouri, was revitalized.

ROBERT A. HUNT.

THE WEEKLY RALLY SERVICE

What Is It?

At first glance of the title page, two answers to this question may come:

"Just another organization in the church," says one, "and we are already organized to death. The General Conference or the Congress of the United States or some other lawmaking body will have to create a week with more nights, and some unseen power will have to endow men with superhuman endurance, if we are to keep up with and attend all of these organizations."

"Another wild scheme to do away with the old-fashioned prayer meeting," says the very conservative man, whose specialty is clinging to the old things for the sake of the memories clustering about them, rather than for their efficiency to meet the needs of the age in which we live.

WEEKLY RALLY SERVICE

It means just what the title page would indicate. It is a great, rallying service for all the church—men and women, boys and girls, young and old—in the middle of the week. It is not a fine-spun theory, merely for the sake of theorizing, but a new service for the church, born in the travail of a Methodist preacher's heart and soul, in his endeavor to meet the needs of a city church, but so pliable that it can be adapted to city or country church, with no danger of failing. It is guaranteed to bring success where honestly tried and industriously worked. It has worked; it is now working successfully; it will work in your church.

It does not destroy a single helpful feature of the prayer meeting; it simply absorbs it. It no more destroys the prayer meeting than a woman destroys the dress she is remodeling. She takes last year's dress, that is perfectly good as far as the material is concerned, rips it to pieces and makes it into a new gar-

ment, which is one of beauty and service, and in keeping with the times. The old dress is all there, with perhaps some additions. Nothing has been lost, though some may not recognize that the old is still in use.

The prayer meeting is no more destroyed than the old house that is built anew into a more commodious dwelling of latest design, to meet the need of this day. A new church was needed in a small town. Some objected to tearing the old church down, so the wise ones built around and over it until it was entirely inclosed, retaining the old in the new, yet the new served a purpose that the old never could have served.

So this new midweek rally service does not destroy the prayer meeting. It builds around and over it, until the prayer meeting in any church can be vitalized into a real spiritual and educational asset of the church.

The midweek rally service is a *condenser*. It does not add another service

to an already burdened people, who can hardly find time or strength to attend the services already in operation. One of its strongest features is to be found in its ability to bring many heretofore separate church services into one great service with inspiring qualities, and thus convert many small, weak, struggling, noninspiring services into one great mid-week service which will really have a value in our church work.

This service as planned and carried out successfully by one Methodist Episcopal church, is a combination of the prayer meeting idea and the study classes that ought to be carried on by every church and Epworth League. This constitutes the main feature of the plan.

Secondly, the by-products of the service present a pleasing feature which when understood will alone commend it to any pastor or people who find more church meetings than they have nights or strength to attend.

WEEKLY RALLY SERVICE

Said the retiring pastor to his successor: "If you get thirteen people out to the prayer meeting, you may congratulate yourself." In a little more than a year from that time that midweek service was having an average attendance of one hundred and twenty-five. Of course you will want to know how it was done, for the plan is so simple, and similar results may be obtained anywhere.

Busy men will have time for a really big plan when they will have no time for a small one, and our business men are quick to recognize a plan that is worth while. How to get our men and women, both young and old, to give one night each week to the church was one preacher's problem. It is every preacher's problem.

The midweek rally service might be called the institute plan. People need to pray, but they ought to pray intelligently. To inform our people, young and old, on the important matters that

every Christian ought to know is the purpose of the service.

Dr. Grose, of De Pauw University, has a chapter on "Teaching Religion" in his book entitled The Outlook for Religion, that ought to be read by every one who aspires to Christian leadership. He says: "The uninstructed religious mind of the present is the fertile soil for the growth of numberless religious fads —Theosophy, New Thought, Christian Scienceism, and various mixtures of superstition, pagan thought, and Christian teaching. There never was a time when the apostolic exhortation, 'Be able to give a reason for the hope that is within thee,' was more pertinent than at the present. . . . The church's function, then, is the creation and the maintenance of Christian ideals. Men must be shown what these ideals are and what they demand in thought and conduct. The church must answer by the slow, silent process of Christian education the questions which are vital to

strength of character and peace of mind in every generation. . . . In short, what is the Christian ideal of life for our day? To answer that question so as to command the intellects and arouse the consciences of our time is the inexhaustible and fascinating task of the Christian minister."[1] Thus President Grose sums up the task of the church of today. And it is to partly meet this need that this institutional plan of the midweek service has been put into operation.

The Plan

Here is the plan briefly outlined, capable of adjustment to any and every condition:

7:45 to 8—Song and Prayer Service.

8:00 to 8:45—Group Meetings for Study.

8:45 to 9:00 or 9:15—Short talk by pastor on some devotional topic. Ex-

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[1] See pp. 58, 59.

perience meeting. Report from the classes.

9:00 or 9:15—Dismissal.

Let us first consider the groups for the study classes. Divide your Epworth League into as many classes as you may think advisable. It is not best to attempt to start with too many classes. You will find some natural divisions among your people and it will be best to follow them in making up the classes. If you have only enough for two classes, some plan like the following may be used:

Epworth League Class No. 1

Bible study, selected from the Epworth League Study Course. Make this class of the older members, perhaps the married members.

Epworth League Class No. 2

Mission study class, using the books recommended by the Central Office of the Epworth League. If you can

maintain two Mission Study Classes, you can have both Home and Foreign Mission Classes. The World Outlook will be helpful in the study of missions. It could be used as a text by utilizing the back numbers.

Ladies' Class

This class will be made up of the ladies of the church and congregation who are not members of the League. Use as a study "The Women Characters of the Bible," or perhaps "The History of Methodism." It may be possible to maintain two classes for women. If so they can easily be interested in some mission study.

Men's Class

Christian stewardship, using as text Stewardship Starting Points, by Calkins, or the larger book, A Man and His Money, by the same author.

Class Meeting

An experience and prayer meeting

service for the older people who do not care for the study classes.

Teacher Training Class

For Sunday school teachers and workers. The book recommended by the Board of Sunday Schools for this purpose will be found interesting. Also The Pupil and the Teacher, by Weigle, will be helpful.

Children's Classes

As many as found necessary to care for the children coming with parents.

It was found that some mothers brought their children from the beginning, but there was no place provided for them in the plan, and as they were restless, the mothers were hindered in their enjoyment of the services. Others said that they would come if they knew what to do with their children. So necessity was again the mother of invention, and a class for children was formed and children of all ages were

accepted and given a Bible Story hour. This class became very popular, so much so that it had to be divided into several classes. The older boys were put into a separate class, using Miss Robinson's Story of Bible Victories. You may form any number of classes of children and provide them with lessons from the Junior League Course of Study. It is possible to make this the Junior League of your church, and good results will be obtained.

It is not best to go further into the plan at this time, though later we will show how elastic the plan really is. It is better to start with a simple form of organization and make it successful and then expand, than to weight down and crush your service before you get sufficient experience to operate it. Once started, new ideas will come to you, and the growing work will demand new classes to be formed.

Examine it carefully. Do you really think that the prayer meeting is lost to

the church in the adoption of this new idea of a midweek service? Study it well before you pass judgment upon it. As a rule, the prayer meeting is poorly attended. The leading men and women in the business affairs of the church rarely ever come. The plan in actual operation has interested just these very people and made them regular in their attendance, people who were never known to go to a prayer meeting.

In the church where the retiring pastor said that thirteen would be the average number at the prayer meeting, as many as one hundred and eighty-seven have assembled for this service. Certainly there is merit in a plan that deals with the fundamentals as this does and ministers to such large numbers.

In the average prayer meeting the preacher talks longer than he ought, partly because he knows no better, and partly because he can get no response from the people. If he did get responses, there are so few present that

they could all talk and still have time left.

You will observe in this plan that the minister will have the opening service of prayer and song for fifteen minutes or longer if he desires, and also the same amount of time at the close at his disposal. This time wisely used yields more and better results, many times over, than the average prayer meeting as it is often conducted. The actual experience shows more prayers and more people participating in the opening and closing periods than was ever obtained in the old way of conducting the prayer meeting.

There is a reason for this. First, a larger number present would naturally bring more response. But the other reason is more important. The individuals come from these various classes with something on their minds and in their hearts. They have heard that which helps to create for them a vocabulary for praying and speaking about

the things of God, and which helps to deepen their Christian experience out of which they cry unto the Lord, either for further light, or in praise to him for the broadened vision that is becoming theirs. They will come from these classes, if properly conducted, buoyant and happy, running over with enthusiasm for the subject they have been studying, and a ready response will be forthcoming to the invitation to speak, if the pastor is wise in conducting this service.

The class-meeting feature for those who desire nothing but the old prayer-meeting idea is an opportunity for the study of the different phases of Christian experience, and has proven a wonderful blessing for those who attend. It is a good place to plant some new convert, especially one who is inclined to waver and is susceptible to temptation. The man converted late in life and who needs a steady growth in grace, can be nourished in the class meeting at the

same time that all these other classes are pursuing their studies.

Enough for the prayer meeting side of this partnership. It is plain to be seen that the old structure is in the new. Nothing is lost. We have simply put fire into the fire box, and water into the empty boiler, and are in a fair way to generate steam, to put life into what was a mass of machinery, and make it do effective business. We may have remodeled the house, but we have made it serve the purpose of the hour and nothing has been lost. It has simply been worked over to meet the requirements of to-day, rather than speaking to the world of a yesterday that is past.

So, now, if we can agree that nothing has been lost thus far (and we ought to see a marvelous gain), then all else that may be done on this same evening will be clear gain.

The Study Classes

No League ever tried to maintain

Study Classes without many discouragements. One of the largest problems to be solved is how to get an attendance that will justify the effort. The main factor in getting an attendance is the selection of a suitable hour for the classes to meet.

Some churches have successfully carried out the plan of having the Leaguers meet at the church at six-thirty for a light lunch and then from seven to seven-forty-five have their classes, still giving them opportunity to fill any other engagement that they might have for the evening. This is a good plan and is brimful of merit. It works at its best in a church located in the downtown district of a large city.

However, if the Course of Study of the Epworth League is worth while to the younger people, it will be helpful to others in your church who are not affiliated with the League, and who would not feel free to come if it were a detached affair. The linking up of the

study course to a great church movement will enlist many in this work who could not get the benefit otherwise, thus extending the usefulness of the study class movement. It is not best to call all the classes Epworth League study classes, but divide your Leaguers into as many classes as advisable, also having a ladies' class and a men's class, and any others you can, and link the whole of it up to a great church movement.

Another advantage of linking the study class movement up with the prayer meeting, is to be found in the fact that the larger the body the greater will be the enthusiasm. The service with the whole church interested gives dignity to the whole plan, and gives the study classes the proper recognition in the church. For if these study classes are designed to make good Methodists and good Christians of the young people, they will without doubt make better Christians and Methodists of the older ones.

WEEKLY RALLY SERVICE

A Program with a Purpose

The human brain is so constructed—and the heart echoes the desire of the brain—that man is always interested more in that which has a definite purpose in view. A program working toward a definite goal is always attractive. We are a people who want to know where we are going before we start. We must be assured that the end will justify the effort, and the time, and the sacrifice. The average prayer meeting is without a definite goal. I say this, realizing that such a statement will be criticized. It is the custom to hold it when a certain night comes, and that is the main reason it is held. No visible results can be ascertained for a stretch of many years back. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, as to all others. But how different with this rally service! The keen, clear-thinking men and women of the church can see that this program will bring them something

that is worth while, and that they are making a good investment of their time that will be fruitful in return. One minister said, "If we can get our people to study church history, Bible doctrine, missions, stewardship, and all the other fundamental things, which may be studied under this plan, we will have intelligent audiences, that will appreciate our efforts in our sermons." Bishop Quayle said, "This plan carried out will make intelligent Methodists."

Most of these study books are planned for eight or ten-weeks' study. This is well, for they do not become tiresome in that time. It is well to make a schedule of your plan, giving two months to each study and changing the study for each class at the beginning of each two months' period. Thus in a season of ten months, leaving out, possibly, July and August, each class will have completed five studies. A sample schedule is given, which will illustrate the idea, but may be changed to fit any condition:

	Sept.–Oct.	Nov.–Dec.	Jan.–Feb.	Mar.–Apr.	May–June
Epworth League No. 1..	Bible	Missions	Evangelism	Methodism	Stewardship
Epworth League No. 2..	Missions	Evangelism	Methodism	Stewardship	Bible
Epworth League No. 3..	Evangelism	Methodism	Stewardship	Bible	Missions
Women.....	Methodism	Stewardship	Bible	Missions	Evangelism
Men.....	Stewardship	Bible	Missions	Evangelism	Methodism
Class Meeting—Bible Study and Christian Experience					
Teachers' Training Class—Study Book from Sunday School Board					
All Children's Classes use books in Junior League Study Course					

By-Products

Before taking up suggestions as to the methods of promoting and maintaining this Rally Service, it is well to consider the other distinct advantage it presents, and that might be called its by-products. Sometimes the by-products compare favorably in value with the products for which the plant is established. That which a person gets extra, without additional cost of production, is termed "velvet," that is, "all to the good." Where do we find this in the weekly rally service?

The service proper ought to close not later than nine-fifteen. Now, here is the feature that is especially attractive to busy people who are on the board and the different committees of the church. Have all your business meetings of all the different organizations of the church following this service, as far as it is possible to carry out this feature. Your people are there and it will save

them an evening or two in the week. If they are not in the habit of attending the midweek service, they will come if they can enjoy the service and attend to the business of the church in the same evening. Most any man would rather stay a little longer on one evening than to take a whole evening on some other date. Nine tenths of the business of the church may be conducted in this way. The official board could have a thirty-minute session twice a month, if necessary. Epworth League business meetings, committees, and even choir practice may be arranged for following the service. It will soon become the custom to arrange for all such meetings on this evening. When these different bodies come to see the advantage and the time saved, they will learn to expedite business matters and economize their time.

Now, while this is being done the others linger in the church, visiting and enjoying a good social time with each other, which is needful in most of our

churches. This is indeed a most enjoyable feature of the plan. Occasionally it will be well to arrange for some refreshments and invite all to retire to the basement of the church for a thirty-minute social.

How to Begin

The preacher is the key man. The success of the plan depends upon his tact and determination. He must be convinced that it will work. Study it until you are saturated with it. It will grow on you the more you examine it. The pastor should have it clearly outlined in his own mind before attempting to outline it to others. Then when he has his plan completed, at least in his own mind, present it to the Epworth League Cabinet for their consideration, and then clearly outline the plan to your official board of the church. Do not ask for their approval of the plan, but, rather, ask for their cooperation in trying it thoroughly. Do not waver in

your determination to put over this plan, even though some may oppose, for those who oppose the most strenuously will become the most enthusiastic supporters when once they see it in successful operation. After you have the indorsements and support of both League and official board, and have tied them to the proposition, take at least one month for publicity of the plan before you change. Tell the people about it from your pulpit. Talk it in every service. If you cannot reach all your people by pulpit announcements, write them letters. Insist that they make arrangements to set aside that one evening as a great family gathering at the church. Advertise it as a service for the entire family. They will finally come to designate that night as their church night. Point out to them that all services possible will be condensed into that one evening, so it will be convenient for them.

Do not cease the agitation after you

have begun. Do not become discouraged if you have a small beginning. The plan will stand the test of the people who stand back to see how it will work before they enlist. Some will call it an experiment and will wait to see how it works. Others will call it a morning-glory proposition that will wilt and fade and finally die. Never mind what they say. You believe in the plan. It *is not an experiment.* Keep on with the publicity, and each week send out a number of postcards or letters.

Have a roll of each class and see that some one keeps it properly. Watch the absentees, and if they are out for two evenings, drop them a card. When you begin take a separate division and feature it each week. Go over your church roll and your constituency list and send a letter or postcard to every man in your parish who ought to be in the men's class. The next week feature the ladies' class, or one of the Epworth League classes, or the teacher training class

until all have had special attention, and then do it all over again.

Here are some letters which have been used in promoting and maintaining a service of this nature, that will perhaps be helpful and suggestive:

CHOUTEAU PLACE METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

My Dear Friend:

I wish I could tell you how to make more money, or how to invest the money you already have, so that it would double in returns, but I can not.

However, I can tell you how to double your efficiency as a Sunday school teacher.

God is holding you responsible for the salvation of your class, and if you are only doing half as well as you might, *how will you answer God for wasted opportunities?*

The Midweek Rally Service and the teacher training class on Thursday evening will make you a better teacher, and you are defrauding your class if you do not take advantage of it. You owe it to them.

Sincerely,

YOUR PASTOR.

My Dear Friend:

You forgot something very important last week. Now it is not an unpardonable sin to forget once, or even twice (your minister is apt to do that), but it should not become a habit.

WEEKLY RALLY SERVICE

I refer to the midweek rally service being held in your church on Thursday evening. Mr. Hanke, our faithful treasurer, is leading a class in "Christian Stewardship," and deserves the support of every man in the church.

If you are not here next Thursday night the leader will miss you, the minister will miss you, and you will miss something worth while.

I will put your name down right now as one upon whom I can depend.

Quit talking *war* and attend the Midweek Rally Service. It will quiet your nerves, build you up spiritually, and it will——

Well, come and see!

Sincerely,

YOUR PASTOR.

This little parable may be used with good results:

A PARABLE

A certain Preacher sat down to his typewriter one day and wrote a lot of Letters to the Absentees of his Midweek Rally Service.

Some to whom the Letters were sent threw them in the wastepaper basket, and thought how foolish it was for the Preacher to waste postage on them.

Others read the Letter carefully, and said, "Yes, I ought to go," but straightway they forgot all about it.

Some said, "Yes, that is a Good Thing, and if I do not have any other Engagements I will go."

Others said, "Sure, I will be there; other Engagements can be postponed."

TO WHICH CLASS DO YOU BELONG?

Leadership

One of the most important matters to be considered is that of leadership for the groups. The pastor is the key man, but much depends upon the leadership.

The ideal condition would perhaps free the pastor from the responsibility of conducting a class, to be a superintendent and overseer of all groups. However, it will be found necessary in many cases for him to conduct one of the classes. The minister's wife in many cases will be the logical one to organize the women's class. One minister's wife built up a large group of women, using as her subject, "The Women Characters of the Bible."

Produce your own leaders. Do not depend upon outsiders. Study your men and women carefully, and you will find some diamond in the rough. Some tactful, thoughtful, studious person,

one who can command the respect of the people, will often develop wonderfully as a leader when he feels the responsibility laid upon him.

For the stewardship class secure some one who practices stewardship as well as preaches it. For evangelism find some one upon whose heart's altar a fire is burning brightly, and in whose mind there is no fanaticism along this line.

It is not absolutely necessary to have college professors or graduates, though preparation adds to efficiency, but consecration, determination and spirituality are the necessary requirements. A preacher said that he had never been to college, but he had been to Calvary. Get leaders with all the preparation and training possible, but be sure that they have "been to Calvary."

There may be some advantage in keeping the leaders on the same subject through the entire season, merely having them change classes at the end of the eight-weeks' term. It will save con-

siderable preparation, and, better still, will make them experts on the subject they teach. When they have gone through their study five times, gathering new material each time, they will take a certain legitimate pride in their knowledge on that particular subject. The real difficulty in this will be finding people who are versatile enough and pliable enough to adapt themselves to all the classes.

Suggestions Worth While

1. Select the night for this service that will be convenient to the largest number of people. In some places Thursday evening will be found better than Wednesday, and vice versa. The pastor ought to understand local conditions in determining this matter.

2. Have your teacher training class enrolled with the Sunday School Board of our church, and advise with them concerning a proper course.

3. The Methodist Discipline would

make an interesting study, especially for the men of the church, but by all means have the pastor in charge of this class.

4. *Run on schedule time!* This is important. You have no right to trifle with people's time! You are both the engineer and the conductor, and you must observe the schedule. A prolonged meeting may lose some of your people who have to arise earlier than the minister usually does.

5. It is not necessary to run all the studies through all the classes, though perhaps advisable. Special studies may be arranged for a period of eight weeks and inserted into the scheme of studies.

6. A system of credits may be used and a certificate of honor given for a certain attendance agreed upon in the beginning.

7. A preparatory membership class may be added if needed, with the Membership Manual as a textbook.

8. If you desire a study of Methodism

for the children, a Junior History of Methodism may be obtained from the Central Office of the Epworth League. This book is also helpful to adults making this study.

9. For senior classes in church history, such books as, The Worker and His Church, by Beiler; John Wesley, the Methodist; History of American Methodism, and others easily obtained, ought to be in the hands of the leader as reference books.

10. For stewardship classes, use Calkins's books, A Man and His Money, and Stewardship Starting Points. The latter should be used as the text and the former as the reference book. The first named book ought to be read thoroughly by the leader.

11. For evangelism, missions, social service, write the Central Office of the Epworth League for a list of textbooks, as these change from time to time. A letter to our Book Concern at any time will bring a list of books along these

lines. In most of our cities a book is being prepared, giving a survey of the religious and economic life of that particular city, which would be an excellent book to study, especially for the men's classes. As already suggested, make free use of the World Outlook for the mission study classes.

12. A small duplicator may be obtained for a few dollars, ranging in price from three dollars and a half to ten or twelve dollars, which, with the aid of a typewriter, will assist very materially in carrying on the correspondence required to keep this service going. It will be money well spent.

13. Brother Pastor, put *yourself* into this plan. Keep at it constantly. Get the vision yourself, then help others to see it. No plan ever worked alone. Has this plan ever failed? Yes, but it failed because the pastor did not get under the load, or the people did not cooperate. The harder you work the greater will be your success. Put yourself into

it, for in proportion to the degree in which you invest yourself will victory be gotten out of this service.

A Word of Experience

The writer has tried many plans for his Midweek Service. Some success has attended all of his efforts, but the plan herein presented with the added suggestions for putting it into operation and maintaining it, is by far the most satisfactory and productive of all. The whole church has felt the uplift and inspiration of this service. Before this plan was adopted, the midweek service was a real burden, a cross, and ofttimes a disappointment. It was approached with a heartache, because of the indifference of the people. Now no service is looked forward to with more anticipation of real joy and satisfaction than the present *Midweek Rally Service*, and all because it is reaching the larger number of people, and is rendering untold value to the church. The result of

this service is partly manifested now in the higher conception of service for the Master, while part will be felt in the life of the church in the days to come, but its real value will only be told within the portals of eternity, where shall be calculated the real worth of all our labors as seen by all their results.

President Grose's closing sentence, in the chapter of his book before mentioned, is this:

"The supreme task of the teacher-preacher is to give men an abiding and permanent sense of the moral and spiritual values, and to show them the infinite worth-whileness of life."

These are truly words of wisdom, and we believe that a careful plan of education ought to be adopted and carried out in all of our churches. If this experience, which we have tried to state simply and clearly, helps to make a program for your church which shall be educational and inspirational, and which shall give your young people,

and the older ones too, a conception of the "infinite worth-whileness of life," then it has accomplished its humble mission.

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